Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1308NJ-1 for Bergenfield Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The mission of this project goes beyond equal opportunity, suggesting a vision of equity by providing all students with the access to individual learning experiences based on their individual needs. These experiences will be supported by parents, teachers and the community. More information about the role of parents and the community need to be provided in the mission statement and the key elements. More information is needed about sharing best practice, how the committee for success would function, the innovative practices of Bergenfield and other districts. Also, there is a need to develop more specific time-lines for project activities and data analysis.

The Bergenfield School District will serve as a resource and a conduit for this project. This is based on past successes and the interest of the districts to collaborate.The proposal seeks to prepare students with technical and critical thinking skills. An improved level of educator effectiveness, curriculum improvement tied to the core standards, and specific efforts to increase achievement are designed to break the cycle of low achievement in the consortium schools. The applicant has addressed the four core areas with goals and activities designed to accelerate student achievement and increase learning. The applicant describes a credible and clear approach for personalized instruction and the use of data. A key component in this attempt to personalize instruction will be to use students names in adapting content to their needs. Examples are provided throughout the narrative of specific ways that teachers will be able to use data to guide instruction and the specific methods and tools to be used in this process such as e-readers, literacy coaches and mentors.

Each one of the pillars in the applicant's proposal addresses the four core assurance areas with key elements and examples for staff and student improvement. Specific targets for administrative and teacher evaluation and professional development connect the mission with the core assurance areas. Again, more details about how parents and the community will be involved are needed.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a list of the participating schools and numbers of educators as well as the numbers of participating students who are high need students. Since all schools in the consortium districts are involved in the proposal, they are all listed. Students with disabilities are included in other areas of the proposal, but not in this section. The applicant organized the consortium because three neighboring school districts have sought the advice and support of Bergenfield due to its past success. More information is needed about the selection of the consortium members and how Bergenfield has provided resources and support in the past. This will guide future implementation efforts.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Since all schools in the consortium districts are involved in the proposal, they are all listed and, if successful, the effort will have an impact on all students. The outline of the logic model is presented clearly as inputs, activities, and outputs with short term and long term goals. A quarterly data analysis supports these activities. This outline is a plan of action and requires rationale of initiation, adoption and implementation within the four year grant period and beyond. The theory does not articulate about how this action plan can be successful with the Hispanic population and other groups.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

High school graduation rates and increased college attendance have modest goals. Goals for Limited English proficient and special education and other groups are more ambitious goals for economically disadvantaged and other groups at lower grades are also clearly presented and ambitious. They are designed to be above state averages by 2% which is an important commitment given previous levels of performance. Thus, there is evidence for closing achievment gaps for all groups.

The applicant provided strong information in the vision statement about increased equity. However, the applicant does not address this issue in this section. The applicant notes that administrative training is essential. Effective teachers will be developed and clear expectations of professional practice will be measured using the Danielson model. This model is used extensively in many states. The success of this approach is determined by the commitment of the administration and staff to improved classroom instruction and performance. The applicant does not address how this model will be developed in different districts and different settings. The MOU is not explicit on this topic. Leaving important decision making to individual buildings where there might not be a strong consensus or a commitment to grant objectives may impede progress. There is limited evidence to support the idea that most teachers support this grant proposal.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	2

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents evidence of success for some districts in the consortium in the areas of AP courses taken, number of graduates, and students attending 2 and 4 year colleges. The Carteret School District shows some progress in high school Language Arts and AP courses. The Englewood District has shown some promising programs, but there is no clear record of four years of persistent growth in any of the school districts as evidenced by raw student data, charts, or graphs. There are some small indicators of ambitious programs, but the data is not presented coherently or in a meaningful way. The applicant does not provide sufficient performace data for the past four years for high school graduation and the closing of achievement gaps. There is no significant data presented or a complete rationale on how the record of success will guide ambitious reform efforts.

The consortium has plans to provide data to students, parents and educators. There is a general discussion of meetings and a tutorial, but no planned programs for improved and increased parent and community participation. This is essential to achieving the goals of the plan and it is missing.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The state of New Jersey requires that all districts post and publish the salaries of all staff employed. The applicant does not include any samples of these publications and asserts that they are available on web site. Thus, it is not clear if the actual individual salaries for every employee are listed per grant guidelines.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The MOU commits each district to the program. Each district has individual authority under New Jersey law to implement this program. The organizational chart allows for each district to operate in conjunction with the grant and independently in terms of a success committee. Possible conflicts between school districts on definitions and program integration and implementation could arise under this type of organization. The applicant does describe some general plans for dealing with consortia issues in section (E) (1), but more discussion of governance is needed in a consortium that involves several school districts, boards of education and styles of management and instruction.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a list of stakeholder groups and some timelines and general descriptions of participation. Focus groups, brainstorming sessions, administrative meetings and planning sessions were used to gather and present data. Teachers and association presidents were involved in the discussions. The applicant does not state how many parents

and others were involved in the planning process. No records of meeting minutes of these sessions are included in the appendix so there is no formal documentation of the extent of planning and participation by teacher, parents and partners in the in the discussion. There is no evidence presented about how proposals were revised based on input from teachers and others. There is no detailed explanation of how all of the information from all of the stakeholders was collated, processed and put together in a proposal.

There are general letters of support from some higher education, community agencies, teachers' association representatives and a MOU from the collaborating districts. The MOU delineates the roles and responsibilities of consortium members.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Surveys, observations and focus groups will be used to determine some goals and objectives. Specific data about current academic goals from previous years is not included. Past results, surveys, focus groups and observations should be used to guide the current discussion. The narrative in this section does not include any supporting data and specific evidence to support reform efforts. No information is presented to support the logic behind this proposal or a theory of action. A process for gathering information is presented , but not in the detail required to connect current efforts to a high quality plan for the future. Although the applicant addresses needs and gaps in other sections of the proposal , the applicant does not present a high quality plan that analyzes current conditions and presents logic behind the reform proposal.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	3

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully argues that students need to see the relationship between what they are studying and what happens in the working and social world. Five initiatives meet this requirement including on site and on line visits to college and universities, apprenticeships, and the alignment of core standards to curriculum. Students use a variety of media and methods to access curriculum. Specific means and methods to accomplish these worthy goals need some further detail in this section or in the appendix. SMART (specific, relevant, achievable, measurable, timely) GOALS are not included in this section.

The applicant asserts that students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences. "Homework assignments will challenge students to consider what they are learning and to focus on concepts, integration of knowledge, and cumulative experiences." The applicant does not propose any specific content or means or methods to do this other than new online experience will help to get students involved. Using Big Brothers/Big Sisters to help deepen experience is a promising idea; however, this effort will require extensive training and follow through which is not fully articulated in the application. The common core standards will be used, but the applicant has failed to produce a sequence or plan of high quality content that will enable students to be career and college ready.

Cultural diversity training is an important component and the applicant proposes training in this area. Although there is information in the budget about professional development for increasing achievement and teacher effectiveness, specific workshops are not targeted for cultural awareness.

Making learning goals explicit does not necessarily translate into personalized learning. It is a beginning. Effective teaching methods, grouping patterns, and stimulating curriculum are other factors that need further development and specific goals.

The district vision for reform is clearly presented in the first section of the application. Alignment of curriculum with standards provides a starting point for mastery. The applicant does not present a strategy to achieve these goals. Innovative approaches to mastering academic content and a personalized sequence of skill development is not addressed in a strategic manner. A list of generalizations are not supported by activities, deliverables and possible outcomes.

There is little supporting evidence in this section to support that reading practice will occur out of school, how libraries will be involved, how off campus internships will be developed and what percentages of high need students will be involved in these activities. The applicant also needs to document how this program will specifically benefit non English speaking students and students with special needs.

Although focus groups may recognize the needs for change and action, there is no evidence presented that mechanisms are in place to ensure that students are able to understand and use the resources and have the ability to track their own learning.

The extensive use of focus groups and other mechanisms to elicit feed back are not documented. The applicant has not provided any substantial evidence to support their assertions in this area.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant seeks to adapt content and instruction to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments. The primary method of this will be to use the short cycle of assessment and change teacher perceptions of their role and use tools that will not embarrass students with lower achievement levels. These suggestions need more detail to explain how teachers will use assessments and change student perceptions. There also needs to be strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and be college- and career-ready. Having the teacher more attuned to students is a beginning, but more information needs to be presented on how teachers will work with students who have not been succeeding.

The applicant provides a list of activities that could be successful in assessing student progress and planning for future success. Beginning with the Board of Education and the superintendent, each district will conduct a series of training meetings for principals and teachers in order to interpret and use data effectively. The director of assessment will be helpful in this endeavor. Monthly meetings will be scheduled. Details about how trainings will impact teaching are not provided. It is not clear how students will meet college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Specific measurable goals are needed to ensure that student progress is impacted.

A solid outline of activities for improvement for teachers is presented. The use of the framework developed by the University of Washington and Charlotte Danielson offer promise of improving instruction. Evaluators will be required to pass a performance based assessment to be qualified to evaluate teachers. Evaluators will use technology recording information from visits so teachers will have instant feedback. The applicant, however, does not present evidence how the pilot teacher evaluation has improved teaching and learning. Additionally, there is no information about the performance based system for administrator certification and if the system has been aligned with increased student growth.

The plan to use a trainer of trainers approach is a viable method of using a cadre of teachers to help others develop skills in assessment. The activities described such as understanding the science behind short-cycle assessments are sensible. The timeline of activities and specific goals for this endeavor are not clearly defined. The applicant will have mid year meetings and learn how to practice data protocols with other staff. The final implementation of this plan at the classroom level is the most important and is not fully addressed.

The professional growth plan is generally described, but the actual timelines and implementation plans are not presented. One noteworthy activity is to apply professional growth topics to specific activities. It would be helpful if the applicant presented some specific examples of the types of connections that can be made between professional growth and student learning.

The applicant will follow New Jersey's lead in providing access to new teacher applicants who are highly qualified. The applicant does not state if current staff is highly qualified.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium generally outlines the roles and responsibilities of the members of the consortium and each district has pledged support to the success of the endeavor.

The applicant does not provide specific guidelines about how leadership teams in participating schools will be provided with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets.

The applicant briefly discusses the need to provide credit mastery programs. There is nominal evidence of how this will be implemented. There is no evidence that the districts are currently allowing students to earn credit based on

mastery and not the amount of time spent on a topic.

There is no specific information about how students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways.

The applicant does not make a convincing case for adaptable and fully accessible instructional resources for all students. Providing an increased level of technology and increasing awareness of teachers may not translate to increased accessibility. No specific activities are mentioned in this section of the proposal.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The lead school district in this proposal has a favorable computer to student ratio and has provided Smartboards for many classrooms. The applicant does not produce evidence that all students and parents have access to the school infrastructure. The applicant will provide a 24/7 program in the future, but does not provide any specific plans to do so. There is no current information about how lower income parents without access to the internet are involved in accessing the necessary tools to help students inside and outside the schools.

The plan provides multiple strategies to provide technical support and systems for student, parents and other educators to access information and support the school ensure support. More specific information is needed for those parents who may not be able to access technology at the library or other public venues. Some specific goals and timelines for these activities are needed to provide information about timelines and personnel needed especially in the area of parent training.

There is no information presented to suggest that LEA's are using interoperable data systems at this time.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The governance chart provides structure for the project. The independence of the various districts and the fact that the superintendents are mainly responsible for decision making may limit bottom up changes. The committee does not have broad representation from principals, teachers and parents. Superintendents and project directors may not be representative of all parties to the successes of the project. The added layers associated with the governance chart my be workable, but may also cause confusion and communication issues. The applicant needs to address how various districts will cooperate when major issues arise.

The proposal provides for monthly meetings for superintendent and the project staff and allows for a continuous progress report. The method of the reporting process and the structure of communications is partially explained in the chart. The proposal does not address how the applicant will share information and how information will be shared and disseminated after the completion of the project. More evidence is need to how the applicant will make specific adjustments.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a comprehensive list of strategies for ongoing communications with internal and external stakeholders including attendance at community meetings, cultural events, web site information, links to the sites of other partners, social media and a grant report site. An extensive outreach program is planned with lists of agencies involved. More information is needed about how these strategies will unfold and their timing. Broad strokes are provided for communication with all groups; however, special strategies for communication with underserved populations need more attention if these parents are to be more involved.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

 The applicant states that some of the data requested in this section of the application is unavailable and presents a list of performance measures that are consistent with New Jersey's Race to the Top plan.

There are, however, no appropriate health or social emotional goals or indicators of a successful plan per guidelines. The applicant does not present information regarding a consistent rationale for choosing the performance measures. The applicant does not discuss how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan. The applicant does not discuss a theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans to use qualitative and quantitative measures for evaluation of the project.

Data will be collected on staff development through participation and evaluation surveys. Inventories and surveys will be used to measure technology usage. Formal annual reviews will be conducted by an interdistrict committee. The applicant does not state how community partners, individual school principals and staff will be involved in decision making about the results of evaluation. It is not clear if they will be consumers or users of the information. There is no discussion in this section as to how the evaluation of delivery models to students will be evaluated and adjusted if necessary. The interdistrict committee appears to be the mechanism for all activities and this is composed of some project administration and the superintendents. It is not clear how the communication of school leadership teams will be used and if schools will be consistent in their approach to change.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	1

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Section (F) (1) of the narrative briefly summarizes the costs for the four districts at $5.274 million. There is a breakdown of funds in four areas. There is no breakdown by district and no explanation of the sources of the district funds. It is not clear if these are other grant funds, state monies, foundation monies or general education funds.

The narrative of this section does not address one-time identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period, as described in the proposed budget and budget narrative, with a focus on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. A budget narrative is included in the application but it is not connected with goals, time-lines and activities. There are many areas of the budget that do not connect with the general goals of the proposal. For example, the figure of $100,000 per district per year for class coverage of educator effectiveness training has no substantiation based on teacher numbers and needed workshop time. Another area of concern is the percentage of administrative costs related to the overall budget. There is a limited discussion in the proposal about communication and methods of providing access to all. However, there is no budget for these and other communication activities. Extended day pay for teachers who work after school is not referenced specifically as an activity and the goals of these activities are not clearly articulated. The proportion of funds dedicated to technology is not clearly presented and justified.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not presented a plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The plan does not include support from State and local government leaders and financial support. The plan does not include a budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes several community and university partnerships that have served students in the consortium districts. There are appropriate letters of support from partners. The specific role of the partners in the grant is not fully articulated.

 Application guidelines ask for results that must include both educational results and other education outcomes (e.g., children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school, children exit third grade reading at grade level, and students graduate from high school college- and career-ready) and family and community supports The applicant identifies elementary and middle school students as well as incoming kindergartners as groups that will be impacted by the proposal. However, the high school group is included, as self reporting of the likelihood of graduating high school. These type of results and desired results are general and not consistent with the achievement goals stated earlier in the proposal or the goals of the Race to the Top Program. Also, the results are not specifically related to educational and other desired outcomes.

There are some measures designed to track participation with partner groups. There is little discussion about how students will be recruited for participation. There are plans to disseminate information for reevaluation and program adjustment. based on limited survey data. There is also no discussion about training for partners based on the new system of assessment and accountability. There is no discussion or differentiation for tracking students with limited English proficiency or special education needs.

The applicant lists several activities that can be used to scale the model beyond the participating students. These activities could be used to coordinate the activities of the consortium over time and could help improve the programs. These include recognizing school staff, exploring other partnerships, and publicizing the program in the media. These laudatory activities, however, do not constitute a strategy that is time and goal directed.

The applicant lists several activities that could lead to an integration of services such as inviting small groups of children to pre school classes, visits by principals during parent meetings and having teachers identify certain behaviors or unique cultural circumstances. These activities could be helpful in the integration of services; however, this list is not part of a description or a strategy of how participating schools would connect services that address specific needs such as social-emotional, behavioral or acculturation for immigrants.

The goal of knowing each student and his/her needs is the starting point for building capacity. The applicant does not provide a process for identifying assets in the community although there is a statement that the communities are small enough to know where assets exist. There needs to be some evidence of the identification of these recognized service providers and also the attempt to expand the network. A Partnership Advisory committee will have wide representation and revise partnership goals. It is not clear how this group will be formed and what specific decision making powers it will have since it is advisory.

 A resource web site will be helpful in providing information to parents and families about their students' education. It is not clear how a resource web site will engage parents and families in decision making since two way communication methods are not discussed or presented as specific objectives with specific intended results.

A few yearly performance measures are presented, but they are not ambitious or comprehensive in terms of student achievement and desired results for specific populations.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant begins with a strong statement about developing a consortium which will address the four core educational assurance areas and create personalized learning environments. Teacher training, improved evaluation systems, and teacher understanding of how to use data are the major components of this plan. Partnerships will be utilized to expand learning outside the school day. This plan is bold and ambitious; however, the applicant has failed to provide specific, measurable, achievable, reachable and timely goals in almost every area including personalization strategies, development of partnerships, teacher training, communications with parents, budget and governance. The plan lacks details and evidence of past successes and predictions of future results based on articulated plans strategies and activities and evaluation. The plan does not meet the Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	79

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1308NJ-2 for Bergenfield Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Northern New Jersey Consortium for School Success (NNJCSS) scored in the Medium range.

NNJCSS provided evidence of a reform vision based on the core educational assurance areas. Their ultimate goal is to end the cycle of low achievement for the consortium low-performing students in the State. NNJCSS designed an infrastructure to support their reform vision based on their alignment of four Pillars::

- Pillar 1 - Knowing and meeting the needs of each student through the ongoing use of data to assess students' skills, personalize instruction, deepen learning, and track growth.
- Pillar 2 - The Evaluation of educator effectiveness through a collaborative process that links teacher success to student success.
- Pillar 3 - Authentic and effective curriculum tied to Common Core State Standards
- Pillar 4 - A defined path to college and career to ensure that every student is on track to graduate.

The plan detailed goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties. The reform proposal vision seems reasonable; however, the applicant did not provide enough details of their vision to accelerate student achievement.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored Medium range for the applicant's approach to implementation.

The applicant provided the process to use for participating schools by selecting all school. The applicant listed names of the participating schools along with data on the number of educators, number of participating students and number of low-income participating students. The applicant did not provide details for implementation. The applicant stated that all schools were selected; however, more information is needed on the schools that would be identified as needing more assistance. What schools are the lowest-performing schools and what schools would address the subgroups. I am sure that all schools are not the same.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for reform and change.

NNJCSS provided evidence of what will be accomplished based on their reform. The district reform proposal will change the culture by emphasizing that children come first and failure is not an option. NNJCSS provided a logic model that will be implemented. The NNJCCS logic model included:

- Inputs - RTT-D grant, staff, technology, partnerships and time
- Activities - Training, data collection, assessment personalized instruction, additional learning time, evaluation
- Outputs - Analysis of students data, increased technology in classroom, individualized learning environments
- Short-term Outcomes - College and career readiness, higher student achievement, higher graduation rates, CCSS implementation increased teacher administrator effectiveness
- Long-term outcomes - Achievement gaps eliminated, increased student enrollment.

The applicant demonstrated lack of information on what will be done to improve student achievement for sub groups for the individualized learning environments. The applicant details are vague on how the reform proposal will be scaled up. The applicant addressed the element but then stop on providing what would actually be done.

The applicant did provide information for a logic model based on its elements to achieve the results; however additional information should address more of the individualized learning environment.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for improved student outcomes.

The applicant provided evidence that part of their instructional program to increase achievement by having effective teachers to deliver instruction. The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge and New Jersey High School Proficiency are the criterion referenced assessments used to document performance on summative assessments. The applicant provided evidence of Student Growth Percentile yearly. Data was provided to support summative assessment for their core educational assurance including information for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and Hispanics. The evidence also supported decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment.

No explanation was provided on why data from Englewood School District was not available.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	6

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium High range for demonstrating a clear track record of success.

NNJCSS provided multiple measures to show are records of success through:

- Collaborative Teams to promote student achievement.
- Identified a school that was struggling and implemented a growth model that become successful where Math increased for economically disadvantaged and significant increase with students with disabilities.
- Evidence of Instructional Leadership Teams to analyze data and establish action plans.
- Evidence of a system set in place for each school to analyze their data identifying good news and urgent areas.
- Evidence of success provided by the Innovation grant.
- Evidence of BERC-STAR Protocol instructional framework for college and career readiness strategies.
- Examples of schools being observed for teachers innovations with mobile technologies.

Limited information addressed the past 4 years of student learning and achievement. The applicant provided limited information. More information is required instead of one example. The applicant did not provide detailed information for the parent group.

The applicant provided individual information on their data for some of their school districts:

- Bergenfiled Public School increased student achievement and received recognition by the State and Nation, 40% Title I students and 70% minority students.
- Carteret School District increased student achievement slightly. Economically disadvantaged students improved proficiency from 69.5% to 86%.
- Englewood School District increased student achievement in some areas. District is known for IVY Program and Dual Language Immersion Program.
- Garfield School District increased student achievement in some areas. Highlight is PEAK and after-school gifted

program.

NNJCSS included information that showed a record of success. Evidence supported improved student learning outcomes, students performance data for parents and information of lowest performing schools.   Additional information is needed to show their clear record of success.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for increasing transparency in processes, practices, and investments.

The applicant referred you to the website to review actual personnel salaries. Even though the actual salaries are available, the information should be made part of the Race to the Top application. Additional information is needed to show evidence of processes, practices, and investments.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for the State context for implementation.

NNJCSS provided autonomy under State Legal, statutory to implement personalized learning environment. The applicant provided many examples where this occurred as being one of Race to the Top initial grantees such as:

- Innovative strategies to change the culture of low-performing schools
- Multiple state assessment tools

In addition, the Governor's Education Task Force recommended 428 regulatory and 46 statutory changes to provide a structure of a personalized learning environment.   Limited information was provided on what these statutory changes are for implementation to a personalized learning environment.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for stakeholders support for the proposal.

NNJCSS provided evidence on support from stakeholders by letters received. Letters of support from the community leaders, NJDOE Commissioner, mayors, civic groups, colleges and universities, and community-based organizations. These letters showed support of implementing Race to the Top.

Limited information was provided from collective bargaining representation of teachers and their support for the proposal.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range to identify needs and gaps that the plan will address.

The applicant reported how some the needs and gaps would be measured, Limited information is provided on the needs are and gaps between sub groups, Hispanics, and educational disadvantaged. More evidence is needed on how this will be addressed.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range based on for learning.

The strengths identified for the Learning Process are:

- Deep explanation on what will be provided to enhance a rigorous course of study.
- Collaborative team meetings to focus on instructional strategies.
- Individualized instructional strategies.

NNJCSS adopted five initiatives to support their goals that are also relevant to providing the instruction for student goals such as:

1. Curriculum aligned with rigorous national standards.
2. Tools and guidance.
3. 24/7 learning tools
4. Community relationships and partnerships
5. Online visitations

By adopting Common Core State Standards, students will have assessment of readiness for college and career. Limited information was provided on how these standards would be implemented

NNJCSS provided evidence of deep learning experiences based on the type of lessons with high cognitive demand. Using technology will also enhance their ability to provide deep learning opportunities. More information on how teachers would be teaching to provide deep learning experiences.

NNJCSS model is to have teachers provide in their instructional program cultural awareness by the digital media and project-based learning. The applicant provided several examples. Supported evidence was provided on the instructional content and skill development for each student will have a personalized learning environment. They provided evidence of ongoing feedback by the use of data to measure various forms of assessments.

Critical to this reform proposal is how personalized learning would be adopted for each students. Several measures that were identified included use of data analysis, online assessment, and college placement exams. Additional information is needed on what individualized instruction would look like.

Limited information was provided on the type of assessments and applying college and career ready graduation rates. Information was not provided for their low achievement students or sub groups. Lack of evidence of specific content. Limited information on their goals. What would project learning and deeper learning experiences look like? There were no timelines addressed.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range to support the implementation of a personalized learning environment.

NNJCSS provided some evidence to support personalized learning environment by the Consortium plan to standardized tools to assure appropriate implementation. Limited information is provided on how the tools would be used to personalized the learning environment. Focus will be on students instead of traditional procedures of grade level or content area. Data will be used for constant feedback to improve instruction. Limited information is provided on what teachers will do with the data that they will receive.

NNJCSS did not provide information on how the data will be aligned with college and career ready standards.

NNJCSS provided supported evidence that NNJCSS will implement teacher and principal evaluation models in collaboration with NJ Dept. of Education. NNJCSS did not provide information on what the NJ Department of Education model is and what it would look like to improve teachers and principals evaluation for improving instruction.

NNJCSS provided supported evidence to identify optimal learning approaches. NNJCSS did not provide information on what students and teachers will do with the technology and how it would be integrated into the personalized learning environment.

NNJCSS provided limited information on what will be done in the classroom to personalize instruction. Limited information provided on what will be done for subgroups since these students need more attention.

NNJCSS identified the need to have professional development to meet their teachers needs for teaching in a new way. The applicant identified train-the-trainer model. Limited information is provided on the success of this model.

Many of the criterions were addressed by what "will" be done. An example provided is the education evaluation "will" be transformed into a collaborative non-threatening professional learning culture. Limited information is provided by the applicant on how this will be done.

NNJCSS identified the use of bonuses for teachers. Money incentives have not proven to be effective for improving student achievement.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range.

NNJCSS provided supporting evidence that the Consortium governance structure is based on the principles in the Consortium Charter. The Charter endorses guidelines for school improvement.

Evidence to support sufficient flexibility and autonomy was evidenced by the leadership authority over school schedules, calendars, staffing models and others. The policies adopted for this proposal supports a plan for implementation by NNJCSS.

NNJCSS provided evidence for student earn mastery through several ways such as: credit recovery programs, use of pretests to identify gaps, and use of other assessments. Limited information is provided of what the recovery program is and what changes would occur.

Limited information is provided on the how the students can earn mastery. More information is needed in this area. Limited information is provided on the following:

- Practices, policies or rules
- English Language Learners
- economically disadvantaged
- subgroups.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range.

NNJCSS stated that the Consortium will ensure all stakeholders that the Consortium would support the content for improvement. Detailed examples were provided for support such as:

- Assurance that all stakeholders will have access to the necessary content tools and learning resources.
- Appropriate levels of support by professional development, coaching, and mentoring.
- Technology training.

The applicant needs to address how the technology would be used to improve student achievement not to just mention that technology training would be available. Support from all stakeholders was addressed on the application. More details is needed on individual responsibilities and what will be done by the various stakeholders. NNJCSS mentions what will be done; however, limited information is provided on how and who would be responsible. Limited information provided for parent trainings. Evidence was missing on the use of technology for parents.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for continuous improvement process.

NNJCSS provided some supporting evidence to continue improvement process by:

- Organization chart for regular feedback for the reform proposal
- Committee meetings
- Instructional tools such as process mapping, data cycles, and feedback loops

Limited information is provided on details of how their organization feedback would address the proposal for continuous improvement.

NNJCSS stated that they will review what is going on and to support the proposal. More details is needed on how they will support the proposal. Applicant did not indicate how information will be shared publicly. The strategies listed will provide several procedures for continuous improvement. Lack of evidence was provided to utilize the information of what is collected and shared. The information presented should also be addressed in the actual plan for continuous improvement.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Low range for ongoing communication and engagement.

The primary communication for internal and external stakeholders will be the NNJCSS website regarding the Consortium's activities and progress. Information translated in several language will support the Hispanic population. When families do not have communication in their homes, many families do not go to public libraries. Limited information was provided on ways to communicate other than the website.

	Available	Score
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS chose not to address this element because some of the data was not available.

	Available	Score
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for evaluating effectiveness of investments.

NNJCSS provided supported evidence for multiple ways to evaluate the investment. Limited information was provided that after the various procedures were evaluated, what will be done with the feedback and what changes would be made. Limited information on what the school leadership teams would be responsible for.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for the budget.

NNJCSS identified expenditures for the reform proposal based on categories for implementation such as:

- Teaching and leading
- Learning
- Preparing students for college and careers
- Community partnerships

- Consortium management
- Equipment

The entire budget does seem reasonable for implementation; however, several areas in the budget were unclear such as no information on what National Conferences and the purpose of the conference. Funds for the office supplies are excessive. Since the website is already in place, it is unclear if additional funds would be needed for this purpose.

It is unclear on what funds will be used outside of Race to the Top to support the activities.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Low range on the sustainability of the budget.

NNJCSS provided limited evidence on how the project will be sustained other than the support of the Big Brothers Big Sisters community partnerships. Additional information is needed on what will happen when the funds for the community partnerships are not available. The applicant did not provide supporting evidence on the sustainability of the project goals. The plan presented does not show evidence of a high-quality plan based on the evidence presented. More detailed information is needed to be a high-quality plan.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS scored in the Medium range for competitive preference priority.

NNJCSS provided some evidence that the community partnership would be responsible for supporting the program growth.

Limited information on what will happen if the corporate and foundations do not continue support.

NNJCSS used multiple measures to support students. Many examples identified for performance measures to target improvement such as JNASK and HSPA, AP college participation, attendance and SAT participation and performance rates.

Limited information is provided on how the Big Brothers and Big Sisters would improve results over time other than surveys. Moroe information is needed by the partners on how they would support the indicators.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

NNJCSS provided supporting evidence to implement a reform proposal to improve their instructional program. Some examples to to change their current culture to one of personalized learning were provided. The absolute priority was met; however, more detail is needed to accomplish the goals in the proposal. Most of the areas were in the Medium range because the applicant did not present a high-quality plan. The applicant addressed many of the areas on "will". A clear record of success on what has been done in the past needs to be addressed.

Total	210	93

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1308NJ-3 for Bergenfield Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant does name and reference the core assurance areas for the grant competition, there is not a comprehensive or coherent reform vision beyond establishing the Bergenfield School District as a support center and instituting replicated patterns of data analysis, assessment and other varied activities in the other participating districts.

The undifferentiated timeline for phasing in the various activities in each district, in most cases described as 'within 90 days of start of grant period,' does not indicate a vision with relative priorities nor consideration of how these various activities interrelate to each other and the larger goals of the reform efforts as a whole.

More information related to the innovations that the Bergenfield School District implemented would have been helpful as additional context.

There is a significant lack of detail in the overall vision related to the named core assurance areas.

- There is minimal explanation of what data will be used to comprise the planned 'data cycles' to monitor student performance nor details related to how the surfaced data can and should change instruction.
- The notion of personalized instruction as a result of the short-cycle assessments is not explained.
- The online process for the teacher effectiveness evaluators is not described.
- It is not clear how the establishment of smaller learning communities or academies clearly links to college and career readiness.

Detail is lacking regarding the function and alignment of each district's Committee for School Success and its suggested functions.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant clearly indicates that due to the small size of each participating district, all schools will participate. The lack of additional reasoning behind the full inclusion of all schools, however, indicates that the reform vision and approach to implementation does not go beyond considerations of district size. The absence of narrative that surfaces differences and opportunities for implementation at a more careful, differentiated level results in a lost opportunity.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	**10**	**1**

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

As a key element comprising the overall vision of reform, the applicant does not include a detailed, high quality plan that would likely result in multi-district wide change.

- Adopting phrases such as 'children come first' and 'failure is not an option' is not a mechanism by which culture change occurs.
- Descriptions of the components of strong leadership, supportive and engaged boards of education and the use of strategic planning, process management and goals are generic and undefined. The lack of detail and specificity in terms of how strong leadership is defined in the context of these districts, what the strategic planning process entails or

what process management looks like is troubling.

The provided logic model does not provide any level of specifics or detail that indicate high quality planning regarding a reform proposal.

- Generating a list of inputs that includes 'RTT-D grant funds, staff, technology, outsider partnerships and time' does not communicate adequate preparation in terms of communicating a plan.
- Similarly, the elements listed under activities, outputs, short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes are generic and non-descriptive.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

It is positively noted that the proposed training district has had recent experience piloting previous grants such as the Effective Educators for New Jersey grant and the Principal Evaluation pilot.

There is no information provided as to how the applicant determined the particular growth rates as indicated on the LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes chart nor a sense of what particular initiatives or elements of the plan would result in this level of growth.

It is unclear what data sets are described for the Carteret school district data for the rows that are labeled 'Language Arts Literacy' and 'Mathematics'.

The data table provided to describe the efforts to decrease achievement gaps is unclear and difficult to decipher. It is also unclear why information about each participating district as a whole, as opposed to just data from individual schools, is not provided.

There is a similar lack of information or discussion related to what elements of the reform plan would directly impact the increase in graduation rates as shown.

Overall, based on the information provided related to LEA-wide goals, the applicant's vision is unlikely to result in improved student learning, performance and increased equity in any particularly targeted manner.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Bergenfield school district has exhibited some important academic gains with its students, specifically the remarkable increase in this district's number of AP courses offered, percentage of students scoring 3 or higher, an impressive decrease in the drop out rate and increases in the percentage of students applying to college.

Other pockets of success detailed in some of the other participating districts also seem to be innovative and worthy programs, many of which focus on identified gifted and talented students.

There is minimal data presented, however, that reveal more detailed patterns that relate to closing achievement gaps, college enrollment rates or raising student achievement by other state-specific metrics.

There does not appear to be any strategic effort that was undertaken to address the applying districts' lowest-achieving schools.

The descriptions of interest in making its student performance data to students and parents is vague, naming the interest in sharing information via 'reports, conferences and workshops.' And while the focus on encouraging parents with less formal education makes sense, there are questions related to the appropriateness of suggesting that they need to be 'encouraged' to instill the belief that school success is possible for their children.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant provides a description of the statutory requirements that the applying districts follow related to publishing its personnel budgets, there is no mention of other processes related to LEA practices and investments. Moreover, efforts to indicate that there is an interest and significance in making its past processes open to the public are lacking.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents information that communicates a strong, supportive context that allows for autonomy under the New Jersey legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.

- The state's Race to the Top plan includes a number of examples related to individual school district autonomy, including a focus on innovation at low-performing schools, proposing additional components to the state evaluation model and allowing for local design of additional assessment tools as needed.
- A Governor's Education Transformation Task Force was described that includes a number of recommendations that focus on 'creating a culture that focuses on student outcomes rather than compliance with regulations.'
- The state's granted Flexibility waiver includes a number of stipulations, including further empowering local superintendents and local leaders to customize professional development plans, increasing flexibility around hiring and reforming seniority systems in the context of considering teacher effectiveness.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies a number of participants that were engaged to varying degrees in the creation of this grant proposal. Some of these include the Board of Education, superintendents, teachers and their association, as well as parents, students and community members.

The description of engagement of these various groups is underdeveloped, however, and there is no indication that feedback that was collected resulted in revision or further development of the grant proposal.

For a number of stakeholders, namely the teachers, students and parents, feedback seemed constrained to very limited focus group opportunities. Discussions did not appear related to the specifics of the grant proposal.

The letters of support from the United Way, Boys and Girls Club, NCADD, the Arts Education Center and the public library indicate a good level of support for the proposal. The letters from the participating district mayors, local universities and the career education association, however, are underwhelming, deficient in detail and are by and large, copy-pasted text.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not succeed in presenting evidence of a high quality plan or a clear, logical reform proposal that focuses on needs and gaps.

Description of how information will be gathered related to need and gap analysis is limited to general descriptions and an interest in conducting classroom visits, distributing surveys and conducting focus groups. While the applicant includes some relevant questions regarding student experiences in their classes and investigations related to teachers and their practices, there is no specific inclusion of college and career readiness nor an evident approach for determining student interests from their perspective.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	2

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lists five framing initiatives that intend to focus on connecting student learning to student goals, but does not succeed in providing the sufficient detail to indicate the presence of a high quality plan.

The notion of a curriculum that is available 24/7 that students can access in the formats they use on a daily basis is described in adequate detail.

The idea that teachers will 'take a back seat to students' and provide a range of experiences and feedback for students to explore their passions and interests in depth is not backed up with structures of training and support, for either teachers or students, to actualize this shift. The lack of specifics related to such a shift is also compounded and confused by the additional notion that every teacher will additionally be expected to be 'a reading teacher to advance literacy' as well as 'an educational technology specialist.' No details are provided related to the orientation, training and support that would be required for teachers to balance all of these shifts and new responsibilities.

The applicant's description of the approach to increase deep-learning experiences for students that are linked to college and career standards is generalized and aspirational, rather than specified and grounded in a clear theory of action.

- Reference is made to a vague 'Core Curriculum Content Standards interactive website' that in some unspecified way, is somehow providing features that allow for educators to create curriculum maps, instructionally plan and create assessments that are differentiated, specified to a range of graduation requirements, and relevant to student interests. It is unlikely that any set of website features would so comprehensively enable educators to this wide range of tasks.
- Emerging lessons and learning experiences that are referenced are overly generalized and non-specific.

The applicant does not adequately explain how students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives in a meaningful, curricularly intentional manner. The reference to students attending schools with high levels of student diversity and a general description of 'extensive professional development for teachers to increase their cultural awareness' is not a quality strategy.

The descriptions of personalized sequences of content and skill development for students are overly general and do not reflect a clear theory of action, nor a clear plan, around how to accomplish this core grant requirement. Similarly, the idea that teachers 'will provide a wide array of resources for the students to teach themselves' does not indicate an understanding or consideration of a high quality instructional approach.

The applicant mentions the availability of student progress to teachers students and parents, but it is unclear where that data would 'live' and how it would be accessed in an organized way.

The applicant does not effectively describe specific accommodations or strategies to meet the needs of high needs students beyond the general reference to using 'adaptive strategies.'

The focus on a widely shared reading strategy dependent on student interests and abilities, however, does seem to be a reasonable learning strategy and initiative.

Overall, the applicant does not present a high-quality plan related to a learning approach that serves and engages all students.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	6

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not identify specific training or collaboration opportunities for teachers in professional teams to either support the implementation of personalized learning environments or to guide students towards college and career readiness.

The narrow focus on simply having teachers be more 'attuned' to individual students rather than the grade level they teach or their content area does not reflect a strategy around adaptation of content and instruction.

While the applicant mentions the importance of collecting 'real time' data and identifying a director of assessment, planning and evaluation whose primary job will be to interpret data with school teams, it is not clear what particular data is being collected and towards what ends, beyond the descriptor of determining students' 'current skill level and instructional readiness.'

The applicant does meaningfully address the use of evaluation feedback to improve teacher practice through ensuring evaluators are trained and calibrated in their approach, and by instituting regular instructional rounds in schools. Inclusion of technology integration as one element of the instructional rounds would have been helpful, however, to better align with the overall goals of technology integration in classroom instruction.

While having a data coach and a train the trainers model to get evaluation training and access to teachers is important, there is not enough detail regarding how the short cycle assessments link to particular instructional strategies, to longer term college and career interests of students, and the 'instantaneous technologically-gathered student data.'

The approach of teacher evaluation as a collaborative, supportive and professional learning opportunity is a positive one. There is some confusion regarding who is responsible for what level of professional development in the application, however,

and the idea that teacher professional development could consist of 'action research, literature review and creating and delivering presentations to colleagues' seems overly burdensome.

There is a strong plan in place to incentivize highly motivated and effective teachers to work in hard to staff schools and for critical subject areas.

As a whole, the applicant does not adequately communicate a thorough, developed high-quality plan related to teaching and leading.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

While it is clear that the proposed Consortium governance provides the framework for district participation, there is minimal detail regarding the function of school leadership teams and their relationship to the school-based professional learning communities and how each school's professional learning community will be thoughtfully aligned with others in each individual district, and for the Consortium at large.

The nominal descriptions of credit recovery programs, pretests and pen and pencil tests are not convincing representations of thoughtfulness around how students can demonstrate mastery, nor does the one sentence response give clarity or confidence in the ability of the applicant to institutionalize multiple opportunities for students to show progress.

The minimal description of learning resources and practices focused on students with disabilities and English language learners also is inadequate.

These factors collectively result in the lack of a high quality plan related to LEA practices, policies and rules.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant expresses an important interest regarding the strong engagement of students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders and cites the success of Bergenfield School District in rapidly expanding the ratio of students having access to Smartboards, the internet and computers. It is unclear what strategies were implemented, however, regarding access to technology outside of the confines of the school to those who may not afford these tools; this is particularly critical given the focus on providing '24/7' educational opportunities. The notion of 'leveraging technology to meet student needs' also does not clearly connect or translate automatically to the ongoing participation of parents, as described by the applicant.

The applicant does list a number of strategies related to helping teachers and parents in particular to access the generally described 'technology infrastructure.' There is little sense, however, that these particular partnerships or programs of study have been prioritized related to effectiveness or have been thought through with any specificity. There is also a nominal amount of identified strategies that connects students themselves as key stakeholders to any personalized learning experience. Beyond the general description of 'online reading and math practice,' the rest of the cited technology infrastructure relates to portals for accessing grade and attendance information, or assessment data.

There is little assurance that there is a clear understanding of what new interoperable data systems would be required for bringing consistency and a shared learning approach between districts, not just internal to individual ones.

The applicant does not provide adequate information that suggests the LEA and school infrastructure would support personalized learning in any new, innovative manner.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Similar to other aspects of this proposal, the applicant does not provide adequate detail to suggest that a clearly identified and planned continuous improvement process would be in place.

- The structure of the referenced NNJCSS Interdistrict/District/School committee/subcommittee is overly simplistic and generic, with the only differentiation of committees evident on whether they occur at the interdistrict, district or school levels.
- The description of the use of data informing general course corrections including changes with 'instruction, curriculum and personnel' does not indicate a level of specificity that suggests that continuous improvement would occur evenly and meaningfully.

The description of process goals achieving a balance of integration and differentiation is largely correct, however, and it is promising to see indication of tools such as process mapping, the use of data cycles and feedback loops utilized to drive conversation in the various committees.

There is a lack of sufficient detail related to how the periodic measurements of effectiveness will be communicated meaningfully to staff, parents and the wider community.

Overall, there is not a clear indication that a coherent strategy is in place for continuous improvement.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant, with a combination of 'high tech' and 'high touch' initiatives, demonstrates a strong level of interest in maintaining ongoing communication with outside community members. The identification of 'key communicators' within the various demographic communities and leveraging existing partnerships with other community organizations is promising.

It is not clear, however, how communication extends beyond the sharing of information to the level of engagement. There is little discussion related to how information will be solicited from stakeholders and how that information would inform continuous improvement efforts.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide the required performance measures that indicate ambitious and achievable performance measures nor a rationale behind the narrative descriptions that were included. This lack of information and detail suggests that performance outcomes are unlikely to occur successfully.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not adequately address a specific approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its proposed grant initiatives.

- The general description of 'quantitative and qualitative evaluation' occurring through 'formal and informal mechanisms' does not describe anything specific.
- The idea of conducting a semi-annual survey of students, parents and teachers is not described in any detail, leading to questions of how the surveys will be written in a way that addresses their individual 'perspectives on NNJCSS strategies and activities.' Students, for instance, would likely need to respond to different questions than their parents regarding their experience of the proposed changes and their experiences would have different implications regarding the evaluation of the various district activities. The applicant does not provide any detail regarding this necessary differentiation.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	1

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not present a budget that is reasonable, clearly related to the implementation of the proposal or evident of

a compelling rationale.

- The large expense for senior level staffing, including 1/2 of the participating superintendents' time, two project co-directors, four chief academic officers and four directors of assessment, planning and evaluation, does not translate as being 'intense professional support' in a way that relates to the level of classroom teaching, professional development or instruction.
- There are instances of unreasonable budgeting, for instance of the computer support specialist and directors of assessment planning and instruction receiving $20,000 of full family benefits on an annual basis.
- The equipment expenditures that focus exclusively on servers, network switches, and wireless access points do not make sense, particularly if the goal is to translate that 'wired capability' into accessibility through digital learning resources that are likely absent at the classroom level.
- Another instance of budgeting excess describes student field trips to 'college campuses, corporations or trade and apprentice programs' at a cost of 160,000 a year without clarity of who would participate in these trips and what those costs might cover.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is little indication that the project goals would be sustained beyond the term of the grant.

The suggestion that a paradigm shift will occur as a result of hiring a core number of top level administrators is unlikely.

The description of a 'train the trainer model' whereby a core team of staff at grade level somehow 'passes on' their new training to incoming staff is aspirational at best. There are no clear elements to the applicant's theory of action that suggests that this kind of teacher leadership role or in-house professional development would be discussed let alone prioritized.

There is also no indication of what additional support from State and local government leaders would be in place after the term of the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a number of initiatives that indicate a strong orientation towards aligning resources and integrating services between schools and selected community partners.

- The success of the Big Brothers Big Sisters work in the Bergenfield School District would likely be successfully replicated in the other participating districts if the organization is also present and active in them.
- The coordination of the local libraries in providing opportunity for students to read books by age-appropriateness and reading level is promising.
- The use of a Youth Outcomes Survey is a promising metric for matching youth with appropriate mentors, indicating an interest in differentiating to each students' needs.
- The focus on partnering NNJCSS elementary schools with pre-school early education providers would likely result in better transitions for these young children, particularly around sharing relevant information and for sharing common instructional strategies.

The notion that the small size and 'tightly-knit' elements of the participating districts is good enough to obviate a needs and asset map of the school and community is troubling.

The population performance measures related to the competitive preference priority is inadequate, listing only numbers of participants over the intended grant calendar rather than any particular educational results or outcomes.

Overall, the applicant does show some promise related to an approach that could yield better integrated services between its schools and community partners.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the applicant does not succeed in presenting a coherent and comprehensive plan towards implementing personalized learning environments that are driven by differentiated approaches, attentiveness to college and career readiness, effective use of data or adequate support of educators. While the applicant presents evidence that the lead district has achieved success in past years in the context of the state Race to the Top grant, there are not adequate descriptions, details or operable plans that suggest that this success would translate effectively to the other districts.

From the application as a whole, it is difficult to distil what the applicant's primary theory of action or theory of change is-- and while the interest in embarking on a 'paradigm shift' by establishing a culture of data could be important, there is a consistent lack of detail that would be necessary to describe how this interest in data and sharing best practices would effectively impact teacher practice and perhaps most importantly, an experience of personalized learning for the districts' students.

Total	210	59